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TO. PRESIDENT

[Redacted Box]

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REQUIRED ACTION. FOR COORDINATION W/ STATE

DUE DATE:

COMMENTS. THIS HAS BEEN SENT TO STATE FOR REPLY, YOU SHOULD COORDINATE
THE REPLY WITH STATE

Helga Brayton K5860
FOR ROBERT M. KIMMITT
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY



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THE HONORABLE ALISTER MCALISTER
TITLE: STATE REPRESENTATIVE

ORGANIZATION: CALIFORNIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STREET:

CITY: SACRAMENTO

STATE: CA ZIP 95814

COUNTRY:

SUBJECT: WRITES CONCERNING THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
ARTICLE OF DEC 21 83, "CIA'S BLIND EYE TO THE
POPE PLOT"

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STAFF NAME: PRESIDENT REAGAN
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Executive Registry

84-536

January 4, 1984

President Ronald Reagan
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

RE: Enclosed Wall Street Journal article of
December 21, 1983, "CIA's Blind Eye to the Pope
Plot," and Editorial of same date, "Undeniable
Terror."

Dear President Reagan:

I am simply appalled at the allegations contained in the
above-named and enclosed Wall Street Journal articles to the
effect that our federal government, at the highest levels, is
deliberately refusing to investigate or expose the Bulgarian and
Soviet complicity in the plot to assassinate Pope John Paul II.

What is your response?

Sincerely yours,

Alister McAlister

ALISTER MCALISTER

AM:kt

Enclosures

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 1983

CIA's Blind Eye to the Pope Plot

By CLAIRE STERLING

The order of arrest for Mehmet Ali Agca signed last night by Attorney General Achille Gualucci accuses the Turkish terrorist of "an attempt on the life of a head of state . . . in concourse with other persons who remain unknown." This last "is not just a precaution; it is more than that," he said.

(Judge) Luciano Infelisi, the examining magistrate who signed the warrant, said more explicitly: "For us, there is documentary proof that Mehmet Ali Agca did not act alone."

—La Stampa of Turin, May 15, 1981 (datelined Rome)

Police are convinced, according to government sources, that Mr. Agca acted alone.

—the New York Times, May 15, 1981 (datelined Rome)

He did not act alone. We know that now, since he has said so himself and the Italian judiciary has confirmed it. If not for Agca's testimony, no amount of fragmentary evidence would have convinced the world that the Bulgarian secret service, acting on behalf of the Soviet Union's KGB, conspired to murder the head of the Roman Catholic Church. Much of the world still refuses to believe it: because it seems unbelievable, and because the Western public, deliberately deceived by its own leaders, was led to conclude that there never was a conspiracy at all.

It took less than 48 hours to mount the deception. Pope John Paul II was shot and very nearly killed in St. Peter's Square on the afternoon of May 13, 1981. The first official falsehood showed up on the morning of May 15, in the New York Times, as cited above, and elsewhere in the international press.

Distorted Image

Alive and in prison, Mehmet Ali Agca was a time bomb, ticking away until the inevitable day when he would be induced to talk. So began a singular Western effort to discredit what Agca might say before he said it, suppress the supporting evidence, dismiss him as an incorrigible liar of unbalanced mind. Why the governments of free nations should have gone to such lengths to shield the Soviet Union is a long story, told only in part here, of ingenious expectations and self-inflicted defeats. How they did it is easier for me to explain than why.

When the first arrests were made on the strength of his confession, in late November 1982, his image was so effectively distorted that hardly anybody was prepared to believe him. Those who might have been willing to listen were discouraged by semi-official leaks to the press. A spokesman for Whitehall in London warned against crediting "convicts who sing to get out of jail." German and Israeli secret services were quoted in the New York Times as blaming the arrests on "doubtful information or downright disinformation." The CIA's deputy director in Rome was quoted in the Italian press as telling the interior minister bluntly: "You have no proof"—this last while rumors were spreading through Europe that Agca had been told what to say, secretly, in his prison cell, by the CIA itself.

The world was left with a somewhat confusing yet somehow comforting image of the pope's would-be assassin that would never quite fade. He was a Turk: that was something people would always remember. It made him truly a stranger in Western eyes, coming from an alien and indistinct Islamic land, stirring hazy visions of fierce mustachioed Ottomans, starving Armenians, and Ambleresque Byzantine intrigue.

Personally and politically, Agca was held to be everything and its opposite. Planetwide headlines had made him out to be at once an unregenerate neo-Nazi and a Moslem fanatic consumed with hatred for the Christian W.

home, and an irrational crackpot; a member of Turkey's right-wing Gray Wolves, who presumably travel in packs, and a loner—above all, a loner.

That suited a great many people at top-most international levels who feared—indeed assumed—that the truth, if uncovered, would prove to be awkward, untimely, impolitic, inexpedient, and thus unacceptable.

Much the same reasoning had contributed greatly to the global expansion of international terrorism over the previous decade. The argument went that detente must not be endangered by exposing the Russians' peccadilloes, that scolding them in public would merely bring out the worst in them—in effect that the KGB would go away if we would only be nice to it.

The results could be measured year by year in the rising levels of terrorist equipment and proficiency, assured by the Russians directly or through their surrogates. By 1981, practically all Western governments had a lengthy record of denying in public what they knew in private to be the provenance of these terrorists' training and weapons. Bigger and bolder terrorist strikes, which they might be said to have brought upon themselves, did not deter them from this course. Judging by experience, the pope's assailants might logically count on their continuing indulgence.

The operation was evidently planned to stimulate the kind of mindless terrorist hit that has gradually been accorded a kind of numbed acceptance, a hit designed not so much to eliminate the victim as to frighten the audience. In this instance, however, the purpose was not to frighten the audience but to eliminate the victim. It was no terrorist hit at all. The setting was an elaborate ruse. The assassin had been hired, and paid. He had no passionate ideological commitments, nor did his employers, who were simply agents of a foreign state. Would Western governments—whatever their past performance—help to keep a secret of such magnitude?

They would, and did. Faced with a crime of the highest international order, against the supreme leader of the largest organized church on earth, a crime committed on Vatican soil by a Turkish citizen whose trail crossed at least seven national frontiers, the Italians were essentially left to deal with it alone. Neither the six other countries implicated

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directly nor any of Italy's natural allies made an urgent point of gathering relevant information, still less of passing it on to Rome. The papal shooting was "not a matter of intense scrutiny" for the CIA, said one of its senior officials in Washington. "It is an Italian matter, and it would be inappropriate for us to intrude."

Vital leads were frequently ignored, knowledge infrequently shared, indispensable evidence withheld. An establishmentarian longing to keep the lid on was apparent wherever I went. "Come, now. Whatever makes you believe there was any such thing as an international plot? Our police in Germany really don't see the attack on the pope as the big operation you seem to think it was." I was told with a tolerant smile by a ranking functionary of West Germany's Bundeskriminalamt.

lirious ideologue," felt "no personal hostility" toward the pope, and "not a word of the proceedings" had shown him to be a religious crank. Far from being crazy, he had "uncommon gifts of mental equilibrium." His "spirit of discipline, professional commitment, and skill in the use of lethal weapons" had made him an ideal instrument for the operation in St. Peter's Square—just that, and no more. In the court's opinion, Agca had "merely been used as a pawn."

Yet the cult of disbelief died hard, sustained by the one source that should by rights have been above suspicion. If anybody ought to be seizing triumphantly on the Russo-Bulgarian conspiracy theory, it was the redoubtable CIA. Precisely because it had come to be seen so widely as the world's primeval anti-communist force

No U.S. intelligence team was gathering information in Turkey or Bulgaria regarding Agca's crucial links to the Sofia-based Turkish Mafia.

(and prime evildoer besides), its exceptional efforts now to exonerate the KGB and the Kremlin were irresistibly seductive. Those who had never believed a thing the CIA said about anything else were happy to take its word on this.

Thus the pacesetters of Western public opinion continued to transmit the steady leaks flowing from Washington and tributary flows from like-minded capitals in Western Europe.

On May 3, 1983, Marvin Kalb stated on NBC's "Nightly News" that CIA Director William Casey had "changed his mind and now believes there may not have been a Bulgarian connection in the papal plot." What, then, became of the CIA's assertion a good three months earlier (on January 31) that Agca's alleged accomplice, Sergei Antonov, was a known Bulgarian agent?

Twelve days later, Judge [Ilario] Martella ruled—for the third time—that "sufficient evidence exists" to warrant Antonov's continuing detention.

By the end of May, nonetheless, yet another unnamed spokesman told Robert Toth of the Los Angeles Times that both the director of the CIA and the president's national security adviser, William Clark, now felt that "efforts to find a Bulgarian Connection . . . have 'run dry.'"

The conversion of CIA Director Casey, spectacular if true, appeared to be recent. He had reportedly believed in the Bulgarian Connection since the previous November, and he had been reinforced in this belief as late as February, upon the return from Rome of Republican Sen. Alfonse D'Amato of New York.

Sen. D'Amato, an Italo-American with a large Catholic constituency, had the president's ear. He was also well connected at the Vatican, and well informed from other sources after five busy days in Rome. No sooner did he get back home than he made a bee-line for the White House.

"The CIA has conducted a war of silence, obstruction, and disinformation in this investigation," he declared at a farewell press conference; and its own investigative efforts, he said, had been "shockingly inept."

No U.S. Embassy anywhere—not in Rome, or Ankara, or Sofia, Vienna, Bonn—had assigned anyone to follow developments in the investigation of a crime that might well affect the future course of international politics and diplomacy.

No U.S. intelligence team was gathering information in Turkey or Bulgaria regard-

spokesman.

No U.S. intelligence agency had passed on to the Italians a cardinal fact I knew to be in American files, connecting Agca to the Bulgarians: the fact that Abuzer Ugurlu, the godfather of the Turkish Mafia who arranged to get Agca out of an Istanbul jail and see him safely installed in Sofia, had been an agent of the Bulgarian secret service since 1974.

The Christian Democratic deputy who told Sen. D'Amato "we got no help from them" was surely right about that.

To my knowledge, indeed, the Italians got very little help from anybody. Not only the U.S., but West Germany, Great Britain and practically every other Western state that Italy turned to had been dragging their feet since the investigation began.

Step by step, between Dec. 17, 1982, and May 28, 1983, the idea was instilled in the public mind that Western "disinformation" had been planted on Judge Martella to embarrass Russia; that the Italians had no case anyway; that the Russians had no plausible motive to want the pope dead; that the Bulgarian-Russian connection could not be proved, in the foreseeable future or ever; that the Italian investigation had reached a dead end and was folding up; and that Agca was an unemployable nut case, who would never have been hired as a hit man by the Bulgarians or anyone else.

Any information to the contrary in Judge Martella's hands was thus discounted in advance as unreliable in substance and sinister in intent.

By May 28, these were no longer mere hints from unnamed spokesmen. Two of the men closest to the topmost peak of power in Washington—William Casey and William Clark—were now identified publicly with this position, which hardly differed from Bulgarian press spokesman Boyan Traikov's. For if there was no such thing as a Bulgarian connection in the papal plot, then the known Bulgarian agent Sergei Antonov could not have been Agca's accomplice. That left only one explanation for his continuing detention: The Italians were framing him.

No Answers

Did the government of the United States really believe that? How could it accept the sleazy artifice and deliberate distortion pointing public opinion in that direction? Why was the U.S. intelligence community resorting to such scandalous practices? Whose interest could be served by denying the increasing likelihood that the Russians had resorted to spectacular political assassination as an instrument of national policy? If the Russians had done it once, were they not capable of doing it again, whenever and wherever a Western head of state might get in their way? Didn't the public have the right to know and consider the tremendous implications of such a Soviet policy?

No answers have come from the incumbent administration in Washington.

Others, unburdened by the weight of office, have not hesitated to speak their minds.

Former CIA Director Richard Helms came right out and said that the papal shooting "had all the earmarks of a KGB operation."

Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger fully agreed.

A former president's national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, was still more forthright. "It takes an act of faith not to believe the Bulgarians did it," he declared.

From the White House, silence.

A related editorial appears today.

This is an edited excerpt from Claire Sterling's book, "The Time of the Assassins," which details both the plot on the pope's life and what investigation has followed. Rinehart & Winston, which it Jan. 4, has permitted this

REVIEW & OUTLOOK

Undeniable Terror

A Turk named Agca shot the pope. Why? Because the KGB, under Yuri Andropov, paid him to do it.

That may well be the verdict of an Italian court next year. Judge Ilario Martella, who's spent two years investigating the role of Bulgarian agents in the attempt on the pope's life, completed his report last week. The trial on "active complicity" charges could begin this spring against Sergei Antonov, a Bulgarian airline official-cum-spy based in Rome. This would be the first official airing of evidence pointing in the direction of Yuri-know-who. Incredible? Yes. But, after considering the evidence, not unbelievable.

Agca has admitted he didn't act alone, telling reporters this summer, "in the attack against the pope even the KGB took part." We now have two new books filling in the cracks in the Bulgarian connection theory. Former national security staffer Paul Henze's "The Plot to Kill the Pope" (Scribner's) is already reaching the bookstores. And Claire Sterling, the Rome-based American journalist who wrote the Reader's Digest article that presented the first evidence of the Bulgarian connection, is about to publish "The Time of the Assassins" (Holt, Rinehart & Winston), excerpted nearby.

It seems reasonably certain that Agca was brought to the Communists through the Bulgarian-controlled arms and drug smuggling in and out of Turkey, and by the promise of big bucks. And more particularly through Abuzer Ugurlu, a Turkish Mafia don who operates from Sofia, Bulgaria. Ugurlu has also been a Bulgarian spy since 1974, according to U.S. intelligence. He runs drugs through Bulgaria from Turkey to Western Europe for profit. And he packs his trucks with weapons for the return trip to Turkey, helping the Soviets try to topple Turkish democracy.

Drawing on the Henze and Sterling accounts, this is Agca's most likely vita:

Agca is recruited by a left-wing group. He spends the summer of 1977 in a PLO training camp in Lebanon. By December 1977 someone or some organization opens a bank account in his name. In January 1979 he confesses to killing Abdi Ipekci, a left-

he escapes from jail, thanks to Abuzer Ugurlu, who also arranges a false passport. He spends an all-expenses paid summer at a hotel in Sofia. There Agca meets one of Ugurlu's associates, who offers him \$1.3 million to kill the pope. While in Rome, Agca is "run" by Bulgarian Rome secret service chief Antonov, who drives Agca to St. Peter's Square the day of the shooting.

So Agca was a highly trained hit man at the disposal of the Bulgarians. The motive of Bulgaria's spymaster, the KGB? Poland. The Kremlin feared that the Carter White House had arranged the election of Pope John Paul II, and that his plan was to help Solidarity lead an East bloc revolt against the Soviets.

This tale of spies and conspiracies is gripping, but there is an even more sobering part of the story. The second half of the Sterling book is entitled "Publishing the Plot, Disturbing the Peace." She describes how U.S. and other Western officials have poohpoohed the Bulgarian link, and ignored strong evidence. It is striking how much distance Western governments have apparently put between themselves and any real investigations.

What we know about Agca we owe to the courage of Italian judges, who live in bunkered homes to avoid assassinations, and who have all but neutralized the Red Brigades. Like Turkey, Italy has been a prime target of Soviet terror exports. Prime Minister Bettino Craxi made drug-running the top agenda item in his recent talks with President Reagan. Even now there is strong pressure from Bulgaria to release Antonov from prison for "health reasons." But so far the Italians have taken the drugs-arms-Soviet terror link seriously, and so should others.

What is needed in most Western nations is some political will to overcome what might be called the "cult of denial." The West seems generally to have tuned out the plot on the pope, "yellow rain" and other Soviet arms-control violations in much the same way it dismissed early reports of Stalin's purges and Hitler's concentration camps. Admittedly the answers to such cruel truths are not easy to find, but the first step is to